



Roslyn McMillan

Biography

Born in Port Huron, Michigan, on October 14, 1953, Rosalyn McMillan was one of five children in the family of Edward McMillan and Madeline Tillman. Her parents were hard-working people and, from early childhood, Rosalyn knew that money was a problem for her family. Her father obtained jobs as a sanitation worker when he was able, but often was not because he was a diabetic and an alcoholic.

Her father died when she was fifteen, and the struggle to make ends meet became even harder. Rosalyn's mother was in between factory jobs. To make sure her family stayed fed and clothed, she had to accept public assistance. Rosalyn and all her siblings went to find jobs doing things like yard work, babysitting and clerking. Because of Rosalyn's excellent skills in typing, McMillan's mother encouraged Rosalyn to pursue the career of a typist. With her ability to type so well she hoped to get a position as an executive secretary. Typing was not the only talent she possessed. She could also sew very well, and this trade landed her a job as a seamstress for Ford Motor Company. Because she was efficient, the job offered good pay, but 20 years of the same thing with no change or challenges gave birth to the desire for something more.

With four children, two marriages, and a full time job, McMillan did not have time to do what she had longed to do since the days of childhood: find the creative outlet to satisfy a deep sensation in her soul. She tried other outlets like jewelry making and lingerie sales, but it just was not what she was looking for. In an interview with People Weekly, she said she thought of herself as a romance novel enthusiast. Rosalyn read over two hundred books before she began to put her thoughts and visions onto paper in a way that satisfied her.

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1953
- * African-American novelist; sister of novelist Terry McMillan
- * First published book was *Knowing*



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Biography continued

She eventually did find time to give attention to the sensation, the urge in her soul to write. Rosalyn was in a car accident in 1989 which caused her to take medical leave from Ford. Also her sister, Terry McMillan (who was already a successful writer) had called her in 1991 telling her that the publishing of books by African American woman that year was low. This also gave Rosalyn more drive to do what she knew she needed for herself. She spent eight to ten hours every day writing.

The outcome was five books in six years. In 1996, she found success with her first book, *Knowing*. It's a story about a woman very much like herself. She works in an auto factory, married with four children, has countless responsibilities, and is unhappy with her job, yet can not just walk away because the risk of losing everything is too great. In 1997, she published her next book, *One Better*. *One Better* is a story that focuses on the relationship between mothers and daughters. The main character in the book is Spice who has two daughters Sterling and Mink. Spice owns a world-renowned restaurant in the south and cannot choose between two men. Sterling is longing for her mother's attention and when she does not get it, she rebels by using drugs and running around with reckless men. While Mink becomes one of the nation's first African-American women pilots, she distances herself from her family in attempts to pursue higher goals. McMillan won the Blackboard Book of the Year award in 1999, and was successful with her third book *Blue Collar Blues*. Two more books followed: *The Flip Side of Sin* and, in 2001, *This Side of Eternity* which was a walk away from her romance novels and into the struggles of an African-American family in the early 1960s.



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Selected Bibliography

Works by the author

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Works about the author

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